

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01

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INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7391

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

USDEL OECD PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EGEN, EMIN, ENRG, AS

SUBJ: AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ALTERS URANIUM POLICY

1. SUMMARY: ON JANUARY 30, THE GOA CABINET WITHDREW THE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION (AEC) FROM ALL URANIUM EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES IN FAVOR OF PRIVATE EXPLORATION VENTURES. THE DECISION REVERSED THE LABOR GOVERNMENT POLICY WHEREBY THE AEC CONTROLLED URANIUM EXPLORATION. THE COMMONWEALTH WILL CONTINUE TO BE INVOLVED IN MARKETING URANIUM ORE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE GOA URANIUM POLICY ANNOUNCEMENT OCCURS ON THE EVE OF THE VISIT TO JAPAN OF MR. ANTHONY, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL RESOURCES AND OVERSEAS TRADE. URANIUM SALES WILL BE AMONG THE SUBJECTS OF AUSTRALIAN-JAPANESE TALKS.

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3. IN THE LONG RUN, COMPANIES WILL BE "RELATIVELY FREE" TO

DEVELOP A DEPOSIT AND NEGOTIATE SALES CONTRACTS. COMPANY ACTIVITIES WILL BE SUBJECT TO EXPORT CONTROLS, SAFEGUARDS, AND ABORIGINAL RIGHTS. FINDINGS OF THE RANGER URANIUM ENVIRONMENTAL INQUIRY WILL BE CONSIDERED.

4. IN THE SHORT RUN, GOA INVOLVEMENT IN MARKETING WILL BE ESSENTIAL TO INSURE THE ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDUSTRY.

5. GOA IS EXAMINING METHODS TO RECOUP GOA FUNDS ALREADY INVESTED IN THE SEARCH FOR URANIUM. THE SALE OF AEC MINING INFORMATION OR INCREASED GOA ROYALTY FROM 1.25 PERCENT TO POSSIBLY 10 PERCENT FOR URANIUM MINED IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY ARE POSSIBLE INCOME SOURCES.

6. AUSTRALIAN COMPANIES WILL BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE IN URANIUM EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES. THE TREASURER, MR. LYNCH, WILL ANNOUNCE IN THE FORTHCOMING PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS, POLICIES RELATED TO FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN THE URANIUM INDUSTRY. GOA NOW HAS THE PROBLEM OF ALLOCATING EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES AMONG COMPETING COMPANIES.

7. A JOINT GOA-PRIVATE INDUSTRY STUDY WILL REVIEW THE FEASIBILITY OF A URANIUM ENRICHMENT PLANT IN AUSTRALIA.

8. COMMENT: THE GOA ANNOUNCEMENT WAS EXPECTED. THE SENTIMENT AMONG MINING OFFICIALS WAS THAT THE FRASER GOVERNMENT WOULD GET THE URANIUM INDUSTRY MOVING WITH MINIMUM GOA PARTICIPATION. THE RESULTS OF THE FORTHCOMING AUSTRALIAN-JAPANESE URANIUM TALKS WILL GIVE SOME INDICATION AS TO THE FUTURE RATE OF URANIUM DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES.

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